

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate gay men's experience of Gestalt psychotherapy. The background to this was a belief that the humanistic and phenomenological base of the Gestalt approach enabled it to manage the diversity of gay men's sexuality, for gay men to be acknowledged and validated by the relationship focus of Gestalt and that the dialogical attitude of therapists enabled gay men to feel changed by this process of therapy, where many other experiences in therapy and counselling have been less satisfactory. A number of gay men and Gestalt psychotherapists who were working with or who had worked with gay men were interviewed. These interviews were taped and transcribed. These transcripts were then analysed using a phenomenological methodology and a number of themes emerged. The main themes were that certain therapeutic qualities were prized by the clients, namely; the self-disclosure/awareness of the therapist, an attitude of openness to the client, being a challenging and supportive person, and being a non-judging presence. In addition that experiences around shame, transference, masculinity and coming-out were dealt with in appropriate ways by therapists providing effective, developmentally relevant therapeutic interventions.